



**Rev. PIERRE PLAMONDON, O.M.I.**  
**(1867-1955)**

*57 years a Priest*

*63 years an Oblate*

One of the last links with the epic missionary days of British Columbia was severed by the death of Rev. Father Pierre Plamondon, who died on May 4th, 1955, in the sixty-third year of his religious profession and the fifty-seventh year of his priesthood. At the ripe old age of 89, retaining to the end his remarkable memory of places, dates and events, at last, full of years and works he rendered his soul to God. He was born in the same year that saw the birth of Canada as a nation, the year of Confederation, at Saint Basile de Pont Neuf in the Province of Quebec on November 21, 1867, the son of Guillaume Plamondon and Adelaide Lamothe.

He attended the parish school and the little seminary of Trois Rivières, where strange to say, in view of his long active life, he was a weakly lad with lung trouble and very little hope for the future. A visit of the famous « Black-robed Voyageur » was the occasion of a promise by the young Pierre to devote his life to the missions if he were cured. Father Lacombe blessed the boy who was at that time too ill to be sent home. Nevertheless, after receiving the blessing of Father Frederic of Notre Dame du Cap, he improved slightly, and entered the Novitiate at Lachine under the direction of Father Boisramé as Master of Novices. He made his final vows on the 17th of February 1893 in company with Father Eugène Pépin, and two recent arrivals from France, Father Hermitte and Father Lechesne.

Both brothers Plamondon and Hermitte were sickly, and after Father Hermitte's death, everyone said, «Poor Brother Plamondon has not long to live». Nevertheless he was tonsured by Bishop Grandin, who was on a return voyage from France. Even after

receiving minor orders from Archbishop Duhamel at the Cathedral, Ottawa, and later the diaconate at the hands of Archbishop Langevin. O.M.I., he was so sick that he had to be sent home.

A change of climate was ordered by the doctor in consultation with his superiors, and this was the turning point in his career. He received an obedience for British Columbia. There he finished his studies, taught by Father Fayard, Bishop Dontenwill and Father Bedard. Final examinations were conducted by Bishop Dontenwill and Father Emile Bunozi (later Vicar Apostolic of Prince Rupert and the young levite was ready for ordination. It was the first ordination (November 17, 1898) of Bishop Dontenwill, and the first ordination on the mainland of British Columbia. The sickly boy was now beginning his long priestly journey of fifty-seven years. Sometimes we do not have to look far to see the finger of God.

His first obedience was to the Holy Rosary Cathedral, Vancouver, with Father McGuckin as his superior. At that time both the wooden church which was used as a Cathedral and St. Paul's Hospital, seemed far out in the woods. A track through the forest ran to the sea shore through what is now the heart of a great city. It was here that the present beautiful Gothic cathedral was built by Father McGuckin, who had already built the old church of St. Joseph's in Ottawa. Father Plamondon's first Mass was said in New Westminster, and very shortly afterwards he was privileged to say Mass in the old Cathedral of Vancouver. In the summer of 1899 he went to New Westminster, where while acting as Bursar he also attended all the missions of the Fraser Valley. This must have been an interesting and fruitful part of the Lord's Vineyard. May 1901, saw him Director of the little Seminary for six months, when he was transferred to Mission City to attend, with Father

Chirouse, to the Indians from Yale to the mouth of the Fraser.

He was then placed in charge of Sechelt Indian reserve, which seems to have been his favorite Mission. Fifty year later he could recall with exactitude the dates of baptisms and the genealogy of the families in that territory. There in 1904 he built an Indian School, costing \$ 11,000.00 which was paid for mostly by the Indians themselves who earned it in the logging camps. Leaving there in 1910, he was appointed Pastor of Cranbrook in the Kootenays, where he also built a school, which, unfortunately had to be abandoned and sold for taxes because the few faithful there could not support it.

After little more than a year as Pastor of Kamloops, he took Father Choinel's place as Pastor of North Vancouver, where he also took care of Indian missions. The fact that Archbishop Casey often came over for the weekends for the parish work in order to leave Father Plamondon free for Indian work gives an idea of the conditions prevailing at that time. When the Archbishop could not come Father Duchaussois filled his place. Later on in 1926 we find the scene changed to New Westminster, with Father Plamondon as Bursar and Chaplain to St. Mary's Hospital, assistant to the Pastor, Father Murphy, and occasional missionary to the Indians along the West Coast. After a short stay at Mission, he was returned to his beloved Sechelt where he worked on the church with its twin towers which still remains as a landmark for all shipping coming into Vancouver Port.

In 1941 he was sent to our most newly acquired missions at Kakawis on an island off the West Coast of Vancouver Island, where the Indian School faces the wide open horizon of the Pacific Ocean. While walking through the bush there on a wooden catwalk, he stumbled and fell into a small creek, where he lay

helpless for some hours before being discovered by accident. He was almost drowned, and other injuries kept him in hospital for almost five months. One would have said then that at his advanced age his work finished. But no. He recovered, and from his headquarters in Mission City he did valuable work supplying for the absent Pastors, especially at Agassiz, not far away from Mission.

He celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his ordination November 28, 1948, after which he was given leave of absence to visit his home in Trois Rivières and to attend various celebrations. Back at Mission, before his leave of absence was finished, surely one would think there was no more work he could do. This was not so. The venerable figure of the octogenarian Oblate priest became familiar throughout the valley, fulfilling the assignment of Our Founder « to be an aid to the secular Clergy! » Always « très digne », wearing a long black coat, carrying his little valise and an umbrella, he was to be seen trudging slowly but surely on Saturday afternoons along the busy streets of Vancouver, or in the villages along the mighty Fraser, going on his week-end mission of charity to the parishes of the rapidly growing Archdiocese of Vancouver. This work he continued to do faithfully to the end. When he was home he was an example of religious observance. Always clean and neat in his dress, he was up every morning at 5 a. m. and attended regularly all the religious exercises. He was always obliging and willing to help, and in spite of the sickness of his youth displayed an indomitable energy. Father Duplanil, O.M.I., related of him that when he was at Sechelt, he kept the shool supplied with meat and fish by hunting and fishing.

But it is a long trail that has no ending and finally after a short illness, his soul, the soul of a true Oblate priest, fortified by the Last Sacraments, at St. Mary's Hospital, New Westminster, went to eternal reward. R.I.P.